



09/919924

**ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE:**

RECEIVED  
NOV 26 2002  
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 2800

A method of storing an optical device with plural optical elements disposed, in which the optical device has a barrel with plural optical elements disposed therein, and protective filters detachably mounted on each end of the barrel, with at least one of the protective filters being provided with a light permeable window. The method includes the steps of: mounting the protective filter on each end of the barrel respectively; supplying the barrel with an inert gas from a gas source; removing a contaminating material attached to the surface of each of the optical elements by using light irradiation; discharging the inert gas supplied in the barrel together with the contaminating material removed from the surface of each of the optical elements; and storing the optical device in a state in which the barrel is filled with the inert gas supplied from the gas source.